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ABSTRACT

In March 1989, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory entered into a contract with the Nevada Department of Education to develop this evaluation design for the Nevada Proficiency Examination (NPE) Program. The NPE program, mandated by state legislation, requires each school district to administer examinations in all public schools to determine student achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics in grades 3, 6, 9, and before completion of grade 12 (usually grade 11). No formal evaluation of the program had previously been conducted. To maximize the chances of providing useful information for decision makers, the evaluation proposed to: review the literature; conduct survey research to collect data from stakeholder groups; maintain an orientation toward program improvement; and use cost efficient methods. Three general areas were identified for the evaluation: (1) similarities and differences between the Nevada program and comparable activities in other states; (2) program administration issues; and (3) program improvement issues. Descriptive statistical methods were planned for analysis of the data collected. The evaluation was scheduled for the fall of 1989, prior to a planned changeover in the tests used to determine proficiency. Appendices comprising half the document contain survey forms and interview questions planned for the evaluation. (SLD)

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A DESIGN FOR EVALUATING THE NEVADA PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION PROGRAM

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A DESIGN FOR EVALUATING THE NEVADA PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION PROGRAM

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June 1989

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I. INTRODUCTION

In March 1989, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) entered into a contractual arrangement with the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) to develop an evaluation design for the Nevada Proficiency Examination (NPE) Program. The design is to enable NDE staff to implement a comprehensive evaluation of the program in the fall of 1989. NWREL may also provide technical assistance in implementing the design and in using evaluation results to improve the NPE program.

Following the contract award, NWREL staff met with the NPE staff in March to discuss general issues relating to the proposed evaluation. A followup conference call in April further clarified primary purposes of the evaluation and related concerns. NWREL staff subsequently developed a preliminary draft of an evaluation design and draft versions of instruments to be used in the proposed evaluation.

Concurrently, the NPE staff assembled a panel of individuals representing the various relevant "stake-holder" and policy-making groups. The panel was charged with the task of reviewing the draft materials and providing feedback to NWREL staff for revising and refining the evaluation design and related instruments. The following individuals served on the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program Evaluation Advisory Panel:

Patricia Boyd
Nevada Department of Education

Jeanne Botts
Nevada Legislative Council Bureau

Janice Clark
Nevada State Board of Education

Kevin Crowe
Nevada Department of Education

Fred Doctor
Washoe County School District

Mark Lange
Clark County School District

Karen Ostrow
Douglas County School Board

Eugene Paslov
Nevada Department of Education

Mavis Scarff
Nevada Department of Education

Robert Scott
Carson City School District

Donald Williams
Nevada Legislative Council Bureau

The advisory panel met with NWREL staff at the Nevada Department of Education on May 23, 1989 to provide input on the evaluation design and related instruments. This document presents the revised design and instruments. During the implementation of the evaluation study, the advisory panel will be reconvened to provide further input, as needed.

II. THE NPE PROGRAM

The Nevada Proficiency Examination (NPE) Program was established in 1977 by legislative mandate in response to accountability concerns. The law, as amended by the 1987 legislature, requires the board of trustees of each school district to administer examinations in all public schools to determine student achievement and proficiency in reading, writing and mathematics. The examinations are to be given before the completion of grades 3, 6, 9 and 12. The law further stipulates that students failing to demonstrate adequate achievement in grades 3, 6 or 9 must receive remedial instruction to help them achieve proficiency. Students failing to pass the high school proficiency examination may be given a certificate of attendance, in place of a diploma, if they have reached the age of 17 years. The law also requires the submission of the results of proficiency examinations by each board of trustees to the state superintendent of public instruction. Such submissions are to be made in accordance with regulations prescribed by the state board of education.

In compliance with the legislative mandate, competency statements were developed in reading, writing and mathematics by work groups consisting of teachers, school administrators, business leaders and legislators. These competency statements were subsequently adopted by the State Board of Education and, with minor modifications over the years, served as the basis for developing the various proficiency tests at the high school level.

In 1984, the State Board of Education adopted a revised set of competency statements in the area of writing. It also adopted the use of a scale score of 370 as a standard for passing the high school proficiency tests in reading and mathematics. This new standard provided a passing rate of 90% for regular students tested in the spring of 1985.

The current program focuses on testing in grades 3, 6, 9 and 11. The *Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills* (CTBS) is administered to students in grades 3, 6 and 9. High school proficiency tests developed by Nevada are administered to students in grade 11. Students must demonstrate proficiency in reading, writing and mathematics to receive a high school diploma.

Proficiency test data are aggregated up to the state level. Data summaries are also prepared for each school district or county. Norm-referenced test data consist of percentages of students in low, middle and high stanine groupings for each grade and subject area. For the high school proficiency tests, passing rates and average scores are reported. In addition, the data include percentages of high school students getting 50 percent or more of the items correct in each subtest or skill area.

Regulations have recently been drafted to further clarify what tests are required, test administration dates, and reporting procedures.

The program is supported by funds which the districts receive as part of their budgets. The State Department of Education, which manages the program, then recovers testing costs from the districts.

Although the NPE Program has been in existence for over a decade, no formal evaluation has been conducted for the program.

III. DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The evaluation of an educational intervention as complex as a statewide testing program will of necessity be primarily descriptive and formative. Since the NPE Program is an existing and continuing activity, it is not possible to use any true or quasi-experimental designs in the evaluation. Instead, we will focus in on other considerations to maximize chances of providing useful information for decision-makers.

Literature Review. A thorough review of the extant literature on competency testing and statewide assessment activities (e.g., NWREL, 1985) will provide information on the similarities and differences between the NPE Program and comparable activities implemented in other states. In addition, much can be learned with respect to advantages and disadvantages of various approaches to implementing accountability systems on a statewide basis. This activity will include a review of records (e.g., data files) maintained at the Nevada Department of Education and/or the various school district offices.

Survey Research. We will depend heavily on survey research methodology in collecting perceptual data from the various "stake-holder" groups. This will include questionnaire surveys of county and school level staff, interviews with state level administrators and members of the State Board of Education and the state legislature. Interviews or surveys may also be conducted with students and parents on a sampling basis.

Improvement Orientation. The evaluation will be primarily formative with a strong emphasis on program improvement. A primary consideration is to obtain information which will be useful in identifying program strengths and weaknesses and in initiating improvement activities.

Cost Efficiency. Throughout the evaluation we will use only the most cost efficient methods of data collection and analysis. For example, instruments will be designed for easy administration and tabulation of results. Onsite interviews will be conducted only if no alternatives exist for collecting comparable information. In such events, we will use the most efficient sampling procedures to select the target groups.

IV. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The current interest in evaluating the NPE Program appears to center around three general areas:

- o Similarities and differences between the Nevada program and comparable activities in other states
- o Program administration issues
- o Program improvement issues

Each of these areas subsumes a number of questions which might be addressed in the proposed evaluation. These are listed as follows:

Program Similarities and Differences

1. In comparison with other state testing programs, how different is the NPE Program with respect to grade level and subject area coverage?
2. How much emphasis does the program place on norm- referenced measurement versus criterion-referenced (mastery of specific skills) measurement? How is the program different from its counterparts in other states in this regard?
3. How different is the program from its counterparts in other states with respect to program governance and policy setting?
4. How different is the program from its counterparts in other states with respect to (a) program goals, (b) staffing, (c) resource allocation, and (d) use of test results?
5. How different is the program from its counterparts in other states with respect to program impact on high school graduation? For example, proportionally how many students are denied a high school diploma because they fail the proficiency tests?

Program Administration

1. Should the program be administered entirely by the state? For example, should the budgeting process be streamlined so that the state keeps the resources at the state level instead of allocating them to the districts and then recovering them from the districts?
2. Who should be involved in setting policies for the program? What interests should be represented in the policy-making process? What role should the districts play in that process?
3. Who should be responsible for quality assurance? What mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that the NPE data are valid and reliable?

Program Improvement

1. What are the strong and weak areas in the NPE Program as perceived by the various "stake-holder" groups? What can be done to strengthen the weak areas?
2. Should the program be expanded to other areas (e.g., more subject areas and/or grade levels) to provide a more comprehensive picture of student achievement in Nevada?
3. How should data be used to maximize their impact on curriculum and instruction at the school levels?

V. DATA COLLECTION

Data collection methods will include literature review, questionnaire survey, and onsite interview.

Literature Review

This will include a review of the relevant research literature to identify similarities and differences between the Nevada program and proficiency testing efforts in other states. Of particular interest will be differences with respect to program goals, governance and impact on students. In addition, a document review will be conducted of relevant data files maintained at the state and district offices. A primary purpose of the document review will be to gather data relating to program impact on high school graduation rates.

Questionnaire Survey

Respondent groups. Questionnaire surveys will provide the bulk of the evaluation data. The survey respondent groups will include the following:

- Teachers
- School administrators
- District administrators
- District superintendents
- Members of local school boards
- Faculty members of post-secondary educational institutions
- Members of the state legislature

Sampling. All district superintendents, school administrators, members of local school boards, and members of the state legislature will be included in the survey. A stratified random sampling procedure, using county and school as stratification factors, will be used to identify district administrators and teachers to be included in the survey. Specifically, a 20 percent random sample of teachers will be selected from each school to respond to the survey. A 20 percent random sample of district level administrators will be selected from each of the 17 districts. In cases where a school or district has fewer than five teachers or administrators, all teachers or administrators will be included in the survey. A random sample of individual teachers or administrators can be identified from a staff list by using a table of random numbers or by a random draw from a pool of names. A 10 percent random sample of faculty members at each post-secondary education institution will be selected to respond to the survey. A random sample can be identified from a staff list by using a table of random numbers. In cases where a post-secondary education institution employs fewer than 10 teaching staff, all members of the teaching staff will be included in the survey.

Survey administration. A mail-out procedure will be used to administer the survey to the respondent groups. A cover letter should accompany the questionnaire to explain the purpose of the survey and to provide instructions for completing and returning the survey. A self-addressed, stamped envelope should be included for returning the completed questionnaire. Also, followup procedures (e.g., letters, phone calls, postcards) should be implemented to improve the response rate.

A revised survey questionnaire and a sample cover letter are included in the appendices.

Onsite/Telephone Interview

Respondent groups. This data collection activity will provide a rich and comprehensive data base for program improvement. Onsite or telephone interviews will be conducted with the following groups:

- State level administrators, including the Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Key members of the State Board of Education
- Key members of state legislature (e.g., education committee members)

- o Key members of school-community organizations
- o Business leaders

Sampling. For each of the respondent groups, a list of names will be identified jointly by the Planning, Research and Evaluation Branch and an evaluation advisory group (e.g., the evaluation design review panel). It is important that the selected individuals constitute a good representation of the various "stake-holder" groups. For example, business leaders should include presidents of chambers of commerce, personnel directors of major employers in each county and leaders of other business organizations. Key members of school-community organizations should include chairpersons of parent-teacher associations and parent advisory councils. With respect to logistics, it is important that the selected individuals be notified of the pending interviews in advance.

Conduct of interviews. We have developed a list of sample questions to be used as a general guide for onsite or telephone interviews. Interviewers may reorder the sequence of questions and rephrase or paraphrase the questions, whenever appropriate. They may even skip questions that are obviously inappropriate in a particular situation. Also, interviewers are urged to use probes (e.g., "Why do you think so?") whenever needed to get a fuller answer or to let the interviewee expand on a response.

We strongly suggest that all interviewers attend an orientation and training session before they conduct the interviews. Samples of interview questions are included in the appendices.

Survey of Students and Parents

To accommodate resource constraints, surveys of students and parents will be conducted in conjunction with existing data gathering activities. Specifically, student perceptions will be gathered through a brief survey attached to or imbedded in the state developed proficiency tests. Students taking the proficiency tests will be asked to complete the survey immediately following the testing session. Parent perceptions will be gathered through the bi-annual telephone poll (*Needs Assessment: The Opinions of Nevada Voters About Their Public Schools*) scheduled to be conducted by the Nevada Department of Education in March 1990. Survey items pertaining to the Proficiency Examination Program will be incorporated in the survey instrument. Taking advantage of the existing data collection activities will result in considerable cost savings and at the same time provide representative results on student and parent attitudes toward the program.

Table 1 presents the anticipated number of survey responses for each respondent group. Sample surveys for students and parents are included in the appendices.

Table 1

Anticipated Numbers of Survey Responses by Respondent Group

Respondent Group		Number of Responses
A.	Survey of total population	
	Local superintendents	17
	Local school board members	104
	Local principals/assistant principals	427
	Legislators	54
	Students*	11,000
	TOTAL	11,602
B.	Survey of 20% stratified random sample	
	Public school teachers	1,739
	Local district assistant superintendents and supervisory personnel	30
	University of Nevada faculty	243
	TOTAL	2,012
C.	Telephone/onsite interviews	
	State level administrators, including the Superintendent of Public Instruction	9
	Members of State Board of Education	9
	Legislators serving on the Education Committee	9
	Parents**	498
	Presidents of local chambers of commerce	17
	Other business and community leaders to be identified	35
	TOTAL	577
	GRAND TOTAL	14,191

* To be collected during the administration of Nevada Proficiency Examination to all 11th graders in spring, 1990.

** To be collected as part of the Department's bi-annual telephone poll (*Needs Assessment: The Opinions of Nevada Voters About Their Public Schools*) in spring, 1990.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

Most of the evaluation data will be descriptive. A significant portion will be verbal information. Accordingly, in most cases, descriptive statistical methods will be used in data analysis. Much of these data will be analyzed in terms of frequency counts, percentages and cross-tabulations. However, some of the perceptual data (e.g., Likert scale data) will be amenable to inferential statistical analysis. Tests of statistical significance, parametric and non-parametric, will be made when warranted.

In interpreting the data, policy implications will be of greater interest than statistical significance. The primary intent will be to enhance our understanding of the NPE Program as a policy tool for strengthening Nevada's accountability system. Much of the information can be interpreted in terms of the symbolic and instrumental value of such a policy tool (Airasian, 1988; Ellwein, et al., 1988). An overriding objective is to provide information that state level administrators will find useful in planning and improving the accountability system.

Major findings will be presented in a written report which will include an executive summary and a section on conclusions and recommendations. The primary purpose of the report is to present information which state level decision-makers can use to make program modification and improvement.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION

General Considerations

The implementation of the evaluation design will require close consultation and cooperation among the NPE staff, the advisory group and the evaluator. A close working relationship will ensure the attainment of two primary objectives: (a) the evaluation information will be meaningful and useful to state level decision-makers; and (b) the evaluation will be of high technical quality so that its results are valid and reliable. Although the design has provided guidelines for instrument development, data collection and analysis, it is likely that some of the procedures may need to be adjusted to accommodate reality constraints as the evaluation progresses. Such adjustments should be made in close consultation among the advisory group, the NPE staff and the evaluator.

Timelines

The evaluation is scheduled for implementation in the fall of 1989. The State Department of Education has adopted the *Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills*, 4th edition (CTBS/4) as part of the proficiency testing activities at grades 3, 6 and 9. It is important that the bulk of the evaluation data be collected prior to the use of the new test to avoid any confounding effects which the change-over might introduce.

Task List

A listing of specific tasks and dates necessary for completing the evaluation follows:

Task		Person Responsible	Date
1.	Develop evaluation design and survey instruments	NWREL	5/89
2.	Review design and instruments	Advisory Panel	5/89
3.	Revise design and instruments	NWREL	6/89
4.	Review relevant research literature	NDE	9/89
5.	Review existing program documents/data files	NDE	9/89
6.	Develop survey mailing list	NDE	9/89
7.	Provide training session for interviewers	NDE	10/89
8.	Administer survey questionnaire	NDE	11/89
9.	Conduct interviews	Interviewers	11/89
10.	Conduct followups on surveys	NDE	12/89
11.	Perform data quality checks and data entry	NDE	1/90
12.	Begin data analysis and interpretation	NDE	2/90
13.	Collect student and parent survey data	NDE	4/90

Task		Person Responsible	Date
14.	Complete data analysis and interpretation	NDE	5/90
15.	Prepare evaluation report	NDE	6/90
16.	Disseminate evaluation results	NDE	7/90
17.	Initiate program improvement activities	NDE	Fall/90

During the implementation of the evaluation study, the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program Evaluation Advisory Panel will be convened to provide input and guidance, as appropriate.

REFERENCES

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. (1985). *Survey of state mandated, standardized testing in elementary and secondary schools*. Portland, OR: Author.

Airasian, P. W. (1988). Symbolic validation: The case of state-mandated, high-stakes testing. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 10 (4), 301-313.

Ellwein, M. C., Glass, G. V., & Smith, M L. (1988). Standards of competence: Propositions on the nature of testing reforms. Educational Researcher, 17 (8), 4-9.

APPENDICES

Sample Cover Letter for Questionnaire Survey

Dear Colleague:

In accordance with a legislative mandate, the Nevada Department of Education established in 1977 the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program. The program requires each school district to administer examinations in its public schools to determine student achievement and proficiency in reading, writing and mathematics at grades 3, 6, 9 and 11.

Students who fail to demonstrate adequate achievement are provided with remedial instruction. High school seniors are not allowed to graduate without passing the proficiency examinations. If they have reached the age of 17 years, they may receive a certificate of attendance in place of a diploma.

The Nevada Proficiency Examination Program uses a standardized achievement test to assess student achievement at grades 3, 6 and 9. Students in grade 11 take state developed proficiency tests in reading, mathematics and writing. The program requires each school district to submit results of the proficiency examinations to the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The Nevada Department of Education is now conducting an evaluation of the program. The evaluation is primarily formative, seeking to obtain information which will be useful in identifying program strengths and weaknesses and in initiating improvement activities. An important part of the evaluation is a questionnaire survey of a wide range of school-community groups. You have been identified as a member of one of the respondent groups.

The enclosed questionnaire is being sent to you as a means of obtaining your perceptions regarding the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program. The survey consists of structured and open-ended items. It is important that you respond to <u>all</u> items. Please use the "?" option if you are not sure about an item or are unable to provide a response.

We would appreciate your completing the questionnaire and mailing it back to us in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. Since you are part of a carefully selected random sample, it is extremely important that we receive your completed questionnaire.

Please be assured that your input will help us achieve a comprehensive evaluation of the program. Also, please be candid in responding to the survey items. The survey data will be summarized in such a way that you will not be identified with your responses.

If you have questions regarding the survey, please call Dr. Kevin Crowe at (702) 885-3130. We would appreciate receiving your completed survey by _____.

Thanks very much for your help with this important evaluation project.

Sincerely,

Nevada Proficiency Examination Program
Survey Questionnaire

County_____
School/Institution_____
Your Position (check all that apply):
___ Teacher
___ School administrator
___ District administrator
___ Local school board member
___ University/college faculty member
___ State legislator
___ Other (specify)_____
Date_____

If you are a school teacher, please indicate grade levels and subject areas which you are currently teaching:

Grade Levels_____
Subject Areas_____

The purpose of this survey is to find out how you feel about the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program. We want your opinions on how it is being implemented and its impact on schools and students. The survey consists of structured items as well as open-ended ones. Please respond to all items.

1. There are several groups of people who may have influence on policies governing the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program. Some of these are listed in the left-hand column. In the column labeled "NOW," circle the number which best shows how much influence you think each group actually has <u>now</u>. In the column labeled "SHOULD HAVE," circle the number which best shows how much influence you think each group ideally <u>should have</u>. Circle "?" if you are not sure or are unable to give a response.

Influence of following groups on program policies

	NOW						SHOULD HAVE					
	None				A Great Deal		None				A Great Deal	
Legislature	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
State Board of Education	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
State Department of Education	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Testing specialists	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
District curriculum specialists	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?

Influence of following groups on program policies

	NOW						SHOULD HAVE					
	None				A Great Deal		None				A Great Deal	
District administration	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Teachers	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Citizen committees	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Parents	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Community at large	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Other (specify below) _____	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?

2. The Nevada Proficiency Examination Program can serve several purposes. Some of these are listed in the left column. In your opinion, how well does the program serve these purposes now? Circle the number which best reflects your opinion under the "NOW SERVE" column. Ideally, how well should the program serve these purposes? Circle the number which best reflects your opinion under the "SHOULD SERVE" column. Circle "?" if you are not sure or are unable to give a response.

How well program serves following purposes

	NOW SERVE						SHOULD SERVE					
	Not At All Well				Very Well		Not At All Well				Very Well	
Provide remedial/ diagnostic information	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Provide standards for high school graduation	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Monitor district educational programs	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Provide standards for grade promotion at the elementary grades	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Provide a basis for deciding which districts should receive additional support or technical assistance	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Provide a basis for sanctioning low-achieving districts	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Collect normative data for accountability	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Provide information to state legislature	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?

How well program serves following purposes

	NOW SERVE						SHOULD SERVE					
	Not At All Well				Very Well		Not At All Well				Very Well	
Provide information to indicate educational status in Nevada	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Other (specify below) _____	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?

3. Information obtained through the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program can be useful to various groups of people. Some of these groups are listed in the left column. In your opinion, how useful is the information to each of these groups now? Ideally, how useful should the information be to these groups? Circle a number under the respective columns. Circle "?" if you are not sure or are unable to provide a response.

Usefulness of program information to following groups

	NOW						SHOULD BE					
	Not At All Useful				Very Useful		Not At All Useful				Very Useful	
Students	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Parents	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Local school boards	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Teachers	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Principals	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
District superintendents	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Curriculum personnel	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
State Superintendent of Instruction	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
State Board of Education	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Legislature	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Media	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Public	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Other (specify below) _____	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?

4. **In your opinion, what kinds of test scores** should be included in reports provided by the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program? Circle "?" if you are not sure.

	Definitely No				Definitely Yes	
Pass/fail rates	1	2	3	4	5	?
Raw Scores	1	2	3	4	5	?
Percents correct	1	2	3	4	5	?
Percentiles	1	2	3	4	5	?
Scale scores	1	2	3	4	5	?
Normal Curve Equivalents	1	2	3	4	5	?
Stanines	1	2	3	4	5	?
Grade equivalents	1	2	3	4	5	?
State averages	1	2	3	4	5	?
District averages	1	2	3	4	5	?
Building level averages	1	2	3	4	5	?
Classroom averages	1	2	3	4	5	?
Other (specify below) _____	1	2	3	4	5	?

5. Currently the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program assesses student performance at grades 3, 6, 9 and 11 in reading, mathematics and writing. In your opinion, which **grade levels and subject areas** should be included in the Program? Circle "?" if you are not sure.

	Definitely No				Definitely Yes	
Grade Level:						
Kindergarten	1	2	3	4	5	?
First	1	2	3	4	5	?
Second	1	2	3	4	5	?
Third	1	2	3	4	5	?
Fourth	1	2	3	4	5	?
Fifth	1	2	3	4	5	?
Sixth	1	2	3	4	5	?
Seventh	1	2	3	4	5	?
Eighth	1	2	3	4	5	?
Ninth	1	2	3	4	5	?
Tenth	1	2	3	4	5	?
Eleventh	1	2	3	4	5	?
Twelfth	1	2	3	4	5	?
Subject Area:						
Reading	1	2	3	4	5	?
Mathematics	1	2	3	4	5	?
Language Arts	1	2	3	4	5	?
Writing	1	2	3	4	5	?
Science	1	2	3	4	5	?
Social Studies	1	2	3	4	5	?
Thinking Skills	1	2	3	4	5	?
Other (specify below) _____	1	2	3	4	5	?

6. **How satisfied** are you with respect to the following aspects of the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program? Circle "?" if you are not sure or are unable to provide a response.

	Not At All Satisfied				Very Satisfied	
Overall purpose(s)	1	2	3	4	5	?
Specific competencies included in program	1	2	3	4	5	?
Graduation standards	1	2	3	4	5	?
Measurement instruments	1	2	3	4	5	?
Grade levels tested	1	2	3	4	5	?
Subject areas tested	1	2	3	4	5	?
Scoring of writing samples	1	2	3	4	5	?
Frequency of testing	1	2	3	4	5	?
Frequency of reporting	1	2	3	4	5	?
Clarity and usefulness of test results	1	2	3	4	5	?
Ways of handling						
(a) Private school students	1	2	3	4	5	?
(b) Home-schooled students	1	2	3	4	5	?
(c) Language different students	1	2	3	4	5	?
(d) Special education students	1	2	3	4	5	?
Program funding level	1	2	3	4	5	?
Fiscal arrangements	1	2	3	4	5	?
The joint administration of the program by the State Department of Education and local districts	1	2	3	4	5	?

	Not At All Satisfied				Very Satisfied	
Dissemination of program information to the public	1	2	3	4	5	?
Use of standardized achievement tests	1	2	3	4	5	?
Use of state developed proficiency tests	1	2	3	4	5	?
Ways in which data provided by the program are currently used	1	2	3	4	5	?
Congruency between objectives/competencies specified in the program and local school curriculum:						
(a) Reading	1	2	3	4	5	?
(b) Mathematics	1	2	3	4	5	?
(c) Writing	1	2	3	4	5	?
Program impact on the instructional process:						
(a) Reading	1	2	3	4	5	?
(b) Mathematics	1	2	3	4	5	?
(c) Writing	1	2	3	4	5	?

7. Information obtained through the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program can be used in many different ways. Some of the possible uses are listed in the left-hand column. Based on your experience, to what extent is the information used in any of these ways now? Ideally, to what extent should the information be used in these ways? Circle "?" if you are not sure or are unable to provide a response.

Extent of use of program information in following ways

	NOW						SHOULD BE					
	Not At All				To a Great Extent		Not At All				To a Great Extent	
Public accountability	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Curriculum improvement at the state level	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Monitoring achievement trends	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Influencing educational policy	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Comparisons with national norms	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Comparisons among districts	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Comparisons among schools	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Incentives	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Sanctions	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Curriculum improvement at the local level	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Increased attention to teaching basic skills	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?
Other (specify below) _____	1	2	3	4	5	?	1	2	3	4	5	?

8. Information obtained through the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program can be used to make various comparisons with regard to student achievement. **Would you be in favor of using the information to make the following comparisons?** Circle "?" if you are not sure or are unable to provide a response.

	Definitely No				Definitely Yes	
Comparing Nevada average with national norms	1	2	3	4	5	?
Comparing one county with another without considering demographics	1	2	3	4	5	?
Comparing one school with another without considering demographics	1	2	3	4	5	?
Comparing one classroom with another	1	2	3	4	5	?
Comparing demographically similar schools	1	2	3	4	5	?
Comparing demographically similar counties	1	2	3	4	5	?
Other comparison (specify below) _____	1	2	3	4	5	?

9. In your judgment, would the following steps improve the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program? Circle "?" if you are not sure or are unable to provide a response.

	Definitely No				Definitely Yes	
Establish a link with state school improvement programs	1	2	3	4	5	?
Establish a link with the accreditation of public schools	1	2	3	4	5	?
Randomly monitor proficiency testing sites to ensure proper test administration	1	2	3	4	5	?
Have all proficiency tests scored by an outside contractor	1	2	3	4	5	?
Have all proficiency tests scored by testing personnel at the State Department of Education	1	2	3	4	5	?
Conduct a statewide annual testing conference to share results	1	2	3	4	5	?
Report proficiency test results by subgroup (e.g., by gender and minority group)	1	2	3	4	5	?
Use a standardized achievement test for all grade levels	1	2	3	4	5	?
Use state developed tests for all grade levels	1	2	3	4	5	?
Increase public information materials provided by the program	1	2	3	4	5	?

10. Please let us know how you feel about the state developed Nevada high school proficiency tests by indicating how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Circle the number that best indicates how you feel. Circle "?" if you are not sure or are unable to provide a response.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree	
(a) The test content is appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5	?
(b) The tests are too easy.	1	2	3	4	5	?
(c) The tests are too difficult.	1	2	3	4	5	?
(d) The tests are just right in terms of difficulty level.	1	2	3	4	5	?
(e) The format of the tests (e.g., print size, item placement, paper stock) is satisfactory.	1	2	3	4	5	?
(f) The tests separate functional from non-functional students (i.e., only functional students will pass the test).	1	2	3	4	5	?

11. Based on your experience with the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program, what are some of the unanticipated program effects? Please include both positive and negative effects. Use reverse side if you need more space.

12. In the space below, please provide any comments or suggestions that would help the Nevada Department of Education improve the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program. Use reverse side if you need more space.

Please return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

Dr. Kevin Crowe, Director
Planning, Research and Evaluation
Nevada Department of Education
400 W. King Street
Carson City, NV 89710

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

Nevada Proficiency Examination Program
Sample Interview Questions

For selected members of the following respondent groups:

Local school boards
State Board of Education
Legislature
State Department of Education

1. In your view, what have been the primary goals of the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program? Do you think these goals should be changed?

2. Who should set policies for the program?

3. What roles should the local districts play in the policy-making process?

4. At present, the program is paid for by the local districts. Should the program be funded that way? If no, how should it be funded?

5. In your opinion, who (which agency) should administer the program?

6. What do you think of the state developed proficiency tests in reading, mathematics and writing? For example, do you think they are too easy, too difficult, or just about right?

7. How should the proficiency test data be aggregated and reported (e.g., by county, by school)?

8. Who should have access to the proficiency test data?

9. Is there any evidence that the program has influenced the curriculum and instruction at the school level? If yes, in what ways?

10. In what ways has the program enhanced (or hindered) student achievement in Nevada?

11. Should the program be expanded to cover more grades and/or more subject areas? Why do you think so?

12. To what extent are the specific competencies specified in the program congruent with school curriculum and instruction?

13. In your opinion, does the program provide information that is useful to the various groups it is intended to serve (e.g., State Board of Education, legislature, Nevada Department of Education, county/school level personnel)?

14. What suggestions do you have for improving the program?

Nevada Proficiency Examination Program
Sample Interview Questions

For:

Business leaders
Community members

1. What do you know about the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program?
2. Do you think it is a good idea to have the program? Why do you think so?
3. In what ways has the program helped the children?
4. What do you think of the state developed proficiency tests in reading, mathematics and writing? For example, do you think they are too easy, too difficult, or just about right?
5. What are some of the things you like to see changed in the program?
6. What suggestions do you have for improving the program?
7. Do you have any other comments about the program?

Nevada Proficiency Examination Program
Sample Questionnaire Items

(To be incorporated in state developed proficiency tests)

Please let us know how you feel about the state developed high school proficiency tests. Tell us how you feel by indicating how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Mark your responses in Block 8 - SPECIAL, items 1 through 9, on your answer sheet.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. The **reading** test is too easy.	a	b	c	d	e
2. The format (e.g., print size, item placement, paper stock) of the **reading** test is satisfactory.	a	b	c	d	e
3. The **reading** test measures skills and knowledge that are taught in our school.	a	b	c	d	e
4. The **reading** test helps provide a good basis for determining who should receive a high school diploma.	a	b	c	d	e
5. The **mathematics** test is too easy.	a	b	c	d	e
6. The format (e.g., print size, item placement, paper stock) of the **mathematics** test is satisfactory.	a	b	c	d	e
7. The **mathematics** test measures skills and knowledge that are taught in our school.	a	b	c	d	e
8. The **mathematics** test helps provide a good basis for determining who should receive a high school diploma.	a	b	c	d	e
9. The **writing** test is too easy.	a	b	c	d	e

Nevada Proficiency Examination Program
Sample Questionnaire Items

(To be used in the Department's bi-annual telephone poll of parents (*Needs Assessment: The Opinions of Nevada Voters About Their Public Schools*) in spring, 1990)

Directions: For each item, please circle the number that best reflects your opinion or perception.

1. How much do you know about the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program?

Very little	1	2	3	4	5	A lot

2. In your judgment, has the program had any effects on the quality of education in Nevada?

Definitely no	1	2	3	4	5	Definitely yes

3. Would you agree that the state developed proficiency tests do a good job in separating functional from non-functional high school students?

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree

4. In general, how would you rate the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program?

Very poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent